

Life of the prophet jeremiah

Religion



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More is known of the life of Jeremiah than of any other literary prophet. He began prophesying in the thirteenth year of the reign of King Josiah (1: 2; 25: 3), i. e. , 627 B. C. , when Jeremiah was but a youth (1: 6). Jeremiah was a reluctant prophet, but felt compelled to speak God's word (20: 9). He prophesied until after Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B. C. (39: 1-10; 43: 7-8; 44: 1), and his ministry lasted a total of about fifty years. Josiah's great religious reformation came in the early part of Jeremiah's work (cf. Kings chapters 22-23), but the reforms did not reach the hearts of the people, for they were still rebellious (25: 1-7). The Jews opposed Jeremiah and his work from the very outset.

First, the citizens of his native Anathoth tried to stop his work and even attempted to kill him (11: 18-23). Even his kinsmen opposed him (12: 6). Jeremiah later moved to Jerusalem, but he endured inveterate opposition there also. When King Josiah died, Jeremiah lamented his death (2 Chron. 35: 25). Jeremiah prophesied against Josiah's wicked successors: Jehoahaz (also called " Shallum") (22: 11-17), Jehoiakim (22: 18-19), and Jeconiah (i. . , Coniah or Jehoiachin) (22: 24- In the very year Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem, Jeremiah announced both his coming and the seventy year captivity of the Jews (25: 1-14). Under the rule of Jehoiakim, Jeremiah preached a great sermon in the temple in Jerusalem (chapters 7-9). After this the princes, prophets, and priests of Judah called for his death (26: 8-11). However, Jeremiah was delivered at that time (26: 24). At the Lord's direction, Jeremiah dictated his prophecies to Baruch, who wrote them on a scroll (36: 1-8).

However, when King Jehoiakim read the scroll, he was so angry he cut it with a scribe's knife and threw it into the fire (36: 20-25). The king commanded that Jeremiah and Baruch be seized, but the Lord hid them (36: 26). Jeremiah dictated the prophecies to Baruch again and added others (36: 27-32). Jeremiah urged King Zedekiah to be faithful to Nebuchadnezzar, but Zedekiah refused (27: 12-22). The Babylonians besieged Jerusalem, and great suffering resulted. Later, Jeremiah was accused of trying to defect to the enemy and was placed in prison (37: 11-15).

Subsequently the king transferred him from the dungeon to the court of the prison and gave him a daily ration of bread (37: 17-21). When Jeremiah again prophesied against Jerusalem, the king turned him over to the princes, who threw him into a dungeon, the bottom of which was filled with mud, into which Jeremiah sank (38: 1-6). Jeremiah would have died there, had he not been rescued by Ebed-Melech, an Ethiopian eunuch of the king's house (38: 7-13). When Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem, he let Jeremiah go free to his own home (39: 11-14).

A mutinous band of Jews murdered Gedaliah, who had been appointed governor by Nebuchadnezzar (41: 1-3). They decided to flee to Egypt for safety, taking Jeremiah with them as a hostage (43: 1-7). They took Jeremiah to Tahpanes in Egypt, where he continued to prophesy against them (43: 8 - 44: 1). The life of Jeremiah was one of sorrow upon sorrow. His people whom he loved and with whom he pleaded unceasingly for fifty years continually refused to hear him, rewarded his labor with rejection and persecution, and eventually perished as the result.